

The Crucible, Act I, by Arthur Miller
Literary Analysis: Dialogue and Stage Directions

Arthur Miller's **stage directions** in *The Crucible* are extensive, detailed, and full of historical information. They provide the setting, background on the situation, and information about characters' backgrounds, motives, and personalities. A reader of the play benefits from Miller's background information by gaining an understanding of the characters as people and why they act the way they do.

Still, *The Crucible* is a play. As in all plays, the **dialogue** carries the burden of communicating to the audience. From the dialogue a reader or an audience member learns how the characters think, how they express themselves, and how they feel about one another and about the situation at hand. It is only through the dialogue that the plot develops.

DIRECTIONS: Refer to dialogue, stage directions, and background information in Act I as you answer the following questions.

1. What do you learn about Reverend Parris's relationship with the community in Act I? Where do you learn this information?

2. What are Abigail's circumstances? What led her to reside with her uncle? Indicate where you find this information.

3. What relationship exists between Abigail and Proctor? How do you know this?

4. When Mrs. Putnam enters the story, how do the stage directions characterize her?

5. In what way do Mrs. Putnam's words and/or actions in Act I support her description in the stage directions?

6. Why is Mary Warren embarrassed and fearful when John Proctor enters the room? How do you know this?

